

Obituary

ARTHUR STANNARD VERNAY

Arthur Stannard Vernay, the distinguished traveller, naturalist, and explorer, and life member of the Society, died at the Rassin Clinic, Nassau, Bahamas, at the age of 83 on October 25th 1960. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Marion Kelley Vernay whom he married in 1908.

Born in England in May 1877, he moved to New York as a young man, but retained his British nationality. In New York he founded the Vernay Galleries, dealing in antiques. He retired in 1941, handing the business over to his employees.

His first visit to India was in 1921, to stay with Ralph Morris, on the Billigirangan Hills. Never before had Vernay seen game animals in their wild state, and he was very impressed. His experiences on this visit inspired the subsequent discussions he had with the late Col. J. C. Faunthorpe, then Commissioner of Lucknow, out of which came their joint offer to the American Museum of Natural History to collect Asiatic mammals for a projected new hall in the museum. Vernay financed the entire cost of the collections and of their transportation. The first Vernay-Faunthorpe Expedition in India was in 1922-23, and was quickly followed by five other expeditions in India, Burma, Siam, and Malaya on which the collections of mammals, birds, insects, reptiles, and botanical specimens for the Asiatic Hall were made.

In 1924 Vernay visited East Africa, and in 1925 he organized and led the Vernay Angolan Expedition, to Portuguese Angola, where he collected the Giant Sable group for the African Hall of the museum. In 1928 he was elected Vice-Patron of the Bombay Natural History Society for a grant which permitted a mammal and ornithological survey of SE. India. The report on the ornithological section of the survey by N. B. Kinnear and Hugh Whistler has formed for many years the basic work on the taxonomic status of the birds of peninsular India.

The Vernay-Hopwood Chindwin Expedition took place in 1935 and in the same year Vernay and Suydam Cutting visited Tibet at the invitation of the Dalai Lama. On many of the expeditions Vernay had personnel from the museum to assist in the preparation

of the specimens for the museum groups. Two later expeditions to Africa were those to the Kalahari in 1930, and to Nyasaland in 1946, the last being his final major expedition. A fruitful expedition on the botanical plane was that of 1938 when Vernay, together with Cutting and G. K. Stanford, visited parts of north-eastern Burma, never before explored by a scientific group. Vernay became a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History in 1935, and held the title of Field Associate in the Department of Mammalogy at his death. He also made contributions of natural history specimens to the Field Museum, Chicago, and the Transvaal Museum.

After 1946 he became interested in Orchids, and he soon became one of the world's authorities on orchids, of which he had a very fine collection. He visited South America in his searches for orchids, and studied the Spanish language for this purpose. This was so typical of the man; whatever he took up he carried out with thoroughness and perfection.

He founded the Society for the Preservation of the Flamingo and saved from extinction the Flamingo of the Bahamas. As a result of his efforts, in co-operation with the National Audubon Society of Washington, a sanctuary was established for the Flamingo on the Island of Inagua—where they have greatly multiplied.

R.C.M.